

Indiana House of Representatives

News and Information

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STILWELL TO SEEK RESTORED LINCOLN AMPHITHEATER FUNDING IN 2006

INDIANAPOLIS – State Rep. Russ Stilwell (D-Boonville) announced today that he has filed legislation for consideration in the 2006 session of the Indiana General Assembly that will restore \$270,000 in state funding for Young Abe Lincoln Amphitheater in an effort to keep the facility open.

Stilwell's measure would help ensure that the amphitheater in Spencer County would remain open for the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birthday on February 12, 2009. The appropriation, which would come from the state budget's general fund, would make the funds available for the second year of the current biennial budget, which runs from July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007.

"We have a commission in place that is responsible for setting up events and educating the public about the life and accomplishments of our 16th president," Stilwell said. "However, there is a very great risk that the facility that would serve as one of the focal points for this celebration will not even be open, thanks to the budget approved by the Republicans in the Legislature."

That budget only appropriated \$1 for the facility, located in the Lincoln State Park, for the second year of the biennium.

"The impact of that Republican budget is already being felt," Stilwell noted. "Officials at the University of Southern Indiana have announced they will no longer produce the 'Young Abe Lincoln' musical at the amphitheater because of a lack of funding.

"There remains some hope that private funding can be secured to keep this facility open, but I cannot see that happening without doing something to provide either additional state support or at least the same levels of support that have been in place for several years," he added. "I believe the state has a commitment to this project, and they should be living up to that commitment, sooner rather than later."

As he has in the past, Stilwell could not help but notice the irony of the state intending to have a large celebration to Abraham Lincoln as it helps to shut down a facility devoted to the president's life that is located in the very area where Lincoln lived.

"Indiana played a key role in the early life of Abe Lincoln, so it is entirely right that our state spend some time recognizing one of our nation's greatest presidents," Stilwell said. "It will be a shame if that tribute is blunted because state government chooses not to live up to its obligations in maintaining facilities that help remember Abraham Lincoln. Through my bill, I hope to see that the state does live up to its responsibility."